

# CORRESPONDENCE

## The Trend of Intelligence

To the Editor, *Eugenics Review*

SIR,—As you point out in your "Notes of the Quarter" in the January 1949 issue of the *EUGENICS REVIEW*, Professor Thomson recognized that "the man in the street . . . is very sceptical about conclusions concerning the difference of intelligence between two generations when these conclusions are based entirely on measurements made on only one generation" and sympathized with his demand for "a straightforward measurement of two succeeding generations." Sharing this scepticism, F. M. Bibby and I presented (see *Journal of Education*, 1948) a criticism of the whole methodology employed by Godfrey Thomson.

The direct comparison has now been made and shows, not a decline, but an increase in mean score from 34.5 to 36.7. Is it not a masterpiece of understatement to comment that these findings "at first sight seem hardly to support the view" that intelligence has declined? Since the prognostication of decline was so widely publicized, would it not be more seemly to admit openly that the survey figures give no support for this forecast?

It is, of course, true that the figures do not prove that intelligence has increased, since the scores may be largely influenced by environmental factors. But that is precisely one of the factors which seemed to us to invalidate the original prognostication, and it appears a little disingenuous to be now explaining away the observed increase in score on these grounds, unless those who had made the original forecast can assure us that, if the score had fallen to 32.3 instead of rising to 36.7, they would not have claimed that as confirming their forecast.

Your analogy with the rise in stature and weight in recent years, owing to better environmental conditions, raises an interesting point. Is it supposed that this is only "a 'false' rise concealing a real fall in innate" physique?

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## A.I.H. and A.I.D.

To the Editor, *Eugenics Review*

SIR,—“Bloody, but” (I must admit not entirely) “unbowed” by the Editor’s Joe Louis answer to my letter, I yet feel I must come up again at the gong. My trouble is that of most of Joe Louis’s opponents—that I do not know nearly as much about the game as he does.

I think that perhaps my mistake was in not expressing myself quite clearly. I asked what had A.I.H. and A.I.D. to do with eugenics? Well, of course, I realized that they had to do with

eugenics in as much as they had to do with genetics. What I meant to say was, how could these two processes, practised *per se*, “improve the inborn qualities of the race,” to quote Sir Francis Galton’s words at the head of our REVIEW?

I still feel that A.I.H. (artificial insemination by the husband) is definitely dysgenic. In any form of stock breeding of which I have any knowledge, to breed from semi-sterile sires is to ruin the breed. Fertility is, I believe, admittedly hereditary. I submit that it is as dysgenic to breed from a semi-sterile sire as it is to breed from a “bleeder”-factor carrying sire. So that when the REVIEW says that A.I.H. is “eugenically without significance” I cannot agree, although I know it means that the actual method makes no difference. Nor can I agree when it says that A.I.H. “has proved an acceptable and safe measure . . . for the treatment of sub-fertility.” I submit that it is not a treatment at all; it is merely a wooden leg. All this does not of course apply to semi-fertility due to “acquired characteristics,” e.g. wounds.

Coming to A.I.D. (artificial insemination by a donor), I do feel that this, as visualized in the article in question, should be kept perfectly clear in the mind from euteleogenesis. Under the latter, presumably, a universally accepted Body would choose the most fitting subjects and mate them, using their expert knowledge of genetics and of the respective pedigrees. There is something to be said for this, but I can personally see nothing to be said from the eugenic point of view for promiscuous far-mating when one partner is not selected in any way and the other by the family doctor. Put it this way; supposing euteleogenesis was in being with a special State Body in charge, all qualified and with access to State kept pedigrees; is it conceivable that they would look on uncontrolled A.I.D. as anything but dysgenic?

As for any falsifying of the birth registers, this so horrifies my sense of genetic proprieties that I am rendered almost helpless. It seems to me to cut at the root of all genetic progress. Nothing can be learnt without trust in pedigrees. What, for instance, would be the value of the pedigrees of distinguished men compiled by Sir Francis Galton and so ably carried on by our late lamented Chairman, Mr. Bramwell, if at any point an A.I.D. changeling could have been slipped in secretly?

Our Editor says, and of course I agree with him, that the discussion of such points comes within the province of eugenics. And I am the first to admit that he discussed them with a range and knowledge that compelled my admiration. But I do suggest that throughout the discussion he appears to come down on the side of A.I.H. and A.I.D. (as opposed to euteleogenesis). That was the point I was trying to make. That the

keener one is on eugenics, the more one should be against the dysgenic A.I.H. and the haphazard, unscientific A.I.D.

The REVIEW sums up by saying "the medical profession could hardly do better than follow the guidance offered by . . ." and goes on to quote a long list of reasons for A.I.H. and A.I.D., *not one of which is eugenic*. Or, at least, not from the genetic point of view, though they include some consideration as to whether the couple would be good child raisers.

I realize, of course, that the original article was a review of the Archbishop of Canterbury's Commission's Report and was naturally somewhat bound by it. But I feel that the introduction of this Report into this discussion is somewhat of a danger because the five references under which the Commission worked did not include eugenics or genetics. Thus to disagree with any part of the Report from a moral or theological point of view does not necessarily mean that one disagrees from it from a eugenic point of view; or vice versa.

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\*.\* Correspondence on the issues raised in this letter would be warmly welcomed.

## Pre-Marital Health Examinations

*To the Editor, Eugenics Review*

SIR,—On reading your editorial comments on pre-marital health examinations (January 1949, p. 181), it occurred to me that readers of the REVIEW might be interested in a first-hand account of how such examinations have worked out in practice. The observations I have to offer are based on the experience of North Carolina, where I have lately enjoyed exceptional opportunities for studying the operation of laws with a more or less direct bearing upon eugenics. I may perhaps add that the material thus accumulated forms part of a work I have recently completed on sterilization practice in North Carolina.

All applicants for a marriage licence are required to present a certificate from a North Carolina physician showing not only that they are free from venereal disease and tuberculosis in the infectious state, but that they are neither epileptic, mentally defective nor of unsound mind. Licence to marry, however, will be granted in certain cases after a sterilization has been performed. This attempt to prevent mating of handicapped individuals is at least a recognition of eugenic values, but in practice the effectiveness of the measure is extremely limited.

Examinations for the health certificate may be carried out by any licensed North Carolina physician, and a charge of 5-10 dollars is made. Free examination is provided by the local health officer or county physician for persons unable to pay. Information on the everyday working of the

measure was obtained from three senior health officers, two members of the State Board of Public Health, a lawyer, a psychiatrist and a number of social welfare executives.

The consensus of opinion held that the health certificate was valuable in controlling venereal disease and had contributed to the recent marked reduction in congenital syphilis, but its efficacy in relation to mental conditions was practically nil. It was frankly stated that the intent of the law was this check on syphilitic individuals, and the eugenic clauses a well-meaning but impracticable gesture. "It's a routine thing," explained one of the doctors in the State Board of Health. "If a person looks normal and passes the blood test, that's all that's required in fact, whatever the regulations may say."

It is obvious that the average general practitioner could not take time to make exhaustive inquiries into family or personal history of individuals who may be unknown to him (choice of doctor for the examination is unrestricted), nor is he equipped to undertake standard psychological testing. Only the grosser cases could be diagnosed by rough-and-ready methods, and such persons are infrequent among couples contracting legal marriage. In the absence of any general system of ascertainment of the feeble-minded, comparable to that adopted in some other States, strict enforcement of the mental requirements of the statute would only be possible if psychological services were established on a much larger scale—a project both costly and unpopular.

Marriage is not necessarily prevented by withholding the certificate, since it is possible for couples who have been refused to cross over into the neighbouring State of South Carolina, where no examination is required, and get married there. Several informants pointed out how this loophole vitiated the effectiveness of the law, and considered that public health measures of this kind should be a national concern, not left to the option of individual States. The health officer of a North Carolina town some 60 miles from the border described the pre-marital examinations given by doctors in her district as "very, very sketchy," but said that tightening up of procedure would be no remedy, since people could so easily go elsewhere. The same criticism was made by another health officer, who thought a mistake had been made by allowing people to go to their private physician, and that such examinations should be carried out solely by the public health authority.

Perhaps the most serious weakness of the law, considered as a eugenic measure, is that it has no appreciable effect on the reproduction of undesirable stocks. As Alva Myrdal says (in criticism of a similar law in Sweden): "Omitting the marriage ceremony is rather a magical attempt to prevent childbearing." Our illustrative cases have shown that feeble-minded and subnormal persons at large in the community are not restrained from sexual